



The Hon Scott Morrison MP
Prime Minister
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

31 August 2021

Dear Prime Minister Morrison,

I write to you today, on behalf of the Edmund Rice education community, about the current situation in Afghanistan. As a nation we have all been moved by the immense suffering that the Afghan people have faced and the prospect of further harm that they currently confront.

Edmund Rice Education Australia is a group of Catholic schools from across the nation. On behalf of our school communities, I thank you for the support that the Australian government has provided up until now under very difficult circumstances. We are grateful for the courageous work of DFAT and the Australian Defence Forces.

We believe however that we can and need to do more. I therefore call on the Australian Government to:

- Grant permanent protection or citizenship to all Afghan people seeking asylum and refugee status currently living in Australia or in immigration detention;
- Declare an intake of at least 20 000 Afghan refugees; and,
- Assist Afghan Australians with urgent family reunion applications for relatives who are in imminent danger.

Like many refugee communities, the Afghani community has contributed magnificently to Australian society for many years. We know this because of the many Afghans who are and have been members of our school communities and the valuable contributions they have made. Not only would the above support be of great humanitarian assistance, it would also be a wonderful investment in the continued building of a vibrant Australian society.

As Archbishop Mark Coleridge, the President of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference, wrote recently to you, "Australia has stepped up before in response to significant humanitarian crises, and I urge your government to be generous," also stating that Catholic agencies "stand ready to assist your government with resettlement of refugees as an expression of our great concern for the people of Afghanistan".

Please be assured Prime Minister, that Edmund Rice Education Australia schools stand ready to assist in any way necessary with the education and support of the Afghan refugees that the Australian government is willing to accept into our nation.

Thank you for considering this request.

Kind regards,

Dr Craig Wattam
Executive Director, Edmund Rice Education Australia